



## Evergreen Public Schools

March 7, 2018

Dear Evergreen Public Schools families:

As the school year began last fall, we shared our core value of student safety and the measures in place to ensure we protect our community's most valuable assets: [www.evergreenps.org/Article-View/eps-values-safety-security](http://www.evergreenps.org/Article-View/eps-values-safety-security). Tragically, even with similar procedures as ours in place, we have seen instances of school violence this year – including a school shooting in eastern Washington in the Freeman School District, and most recently, in Parkland, Florida. At the same time, courageous people have stepped up to report and prevent other similar situations. Nationally, the discussions about violence in our communities, and specifically in our schools, has led to the planning of events and protests, including one set for March 14.

As part of a recently implemented set of student expectation policies adopted by the Evergreen School Board, is one regarding citizenship that includes a section stating “*students will understand how to appropriately advocate for change.*” The nationally planned 17 minute silent walkout on March 14 can be viewed as a learning opportunity for informed and motivated students to discuss intent, method, and overall impact as well as the exploration of what other actions could be taken in place of, or in addition to, a walkout. If a student-led walkout does occur in our schools, the top concern is that we maintain a safe and secure learning environment for all and we are putting plans in place to ensure this.

Long-term, Evergreen is working to improve the safety of our schools. Our passage of the February 13 bond (capital facilities) measure will allow us to significantly improve the physical security of our buildings. We will be replacing a number of schools, resulting in the elimination of nearly half of the district's 369 portable classrooms. For other schools, remodeling will result in a more secure central point of entry, as well as, the addition or upgrade of surveillance systems. Some of these safety and security improvements will begin this spring.

A discussion about preventing school violence also encompasses mental health. Besides using trained school staff, Evergreen partners with six mental health providers to assist students. In addition, this school year, we have set goals for social and emotional learning and initiated curriculum for all students. Your child may already be participating in community circles which is a key foundational element to establishing positive connections and enhancing empathy with our students. It is our hope that positive connections and compassion can become the primary deterrent in Evergreen.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to partnering with Evergreen Public Schools as we all strive to provide a safe, supportive and enriching learning environment for our students.

Sincerely,

Dr. John Steach  
Superintendent